

How Healthy Are We?

The Making of a Report Card on Washington's Health

Our Partners

*Community
Choices 2010*

*Family Policy
Council*

*Foundation for
Health Care
Quality*

*Group Health/
Kaiser
Permanente
Community
Foundation*

*Health Policy
Analysis
Program*

*Premiera Blue
Cross*

*University of
Washington*

*Washington
Health
Foundation*

*Washington
State
Association of
Local Public
Health Officials*

*Washington
State
Department of
Health*

A tremendous amount of information about health is available, and it is used for different purposes – for assessing community health status, for setting clinical priorities, for developing preventive strategies, and for monitoring provider performance. Because of this breadth of uses, health information often appears confusing, complicated, and even contradictory to health policy makers and the public. The Washington Legislature sought to remedy this situation by directing the Department of Health to identify “key health outcomes sought for the population.”

In response, the Department of Health (DOH) issued an action plan calling for the development of a report card on Washington's health. During the year 2000, DOH convened a Key Health Indicators Steering Committee comprised of state and local public health, public and private health care providers, health foundations, academia, family and community interests. The work of this committee culminated in a short list of fourteen indicators that collectively tell us, at a glance, what our overall health looks like.

During the initial phase of the report card development, Committee members examined and reviewed social and health indicators from around the country. The indicators selected focus on the underlying causes of disease – social, community, and environmental factors, as well as personal health behaviors. In selecting indicators, the Committee emphasized health over disease, primary factors (nutrition, exercise) over secondary (obesity), and indicators appropriate for the entire state population over those for subgroups. Measures for each of the indicators, as well as data sources for each measure, were recommended.

This year, the Committee will refine the indicators and measures (based on a technical review), set targets for each measure, and develop recommended strategies for achieving improvement on each measure. In addition, the committee will review information on the utility of the report card to key stakeholders, and will generate tools to assist users in interpreting and making use of the measures.

Our intent is that the report card will be used locally and at the state level by public health officials and other partners to set health priorities and implement strategies across systems – health, social service, environmental, and educational – that contribute to people's health and well-being. At the community level, we hope the report card will complement and enhance locally-generated indicators of health.

Report Card on Washington's Health—"How healthy are we?"

General Health Status:

Years of healthy life

Emotional well-being

Healthy child development

Health Determinants:

How safe and supportive are our surroundings?

How safe are our food, water, and air?

- ◆ Illnesses commonly associated with unsafe food, unsafe water, or poor hygiene
- ◆ Safe drinking water
- ◆ Air quality

How safe and supportive are our communities?

- ◆ Economic:
 - Percent below poverty threshold
- ◆ Social connectedness:
 - Civic involvement/interpersonal trust
 - School retention rates
- ◆ Injuries and violence:
 - Unintentional injuries
 - Domestic violence
 - Child abuse and neglect
 - Violent crimes

How supportive is our health care system?

- ◆ Access to health care
- ◆ Vaccine-preventable diseases